



**Office of the Attorney General
Paul G. Summers**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Paula Flowers**

CONSUMER ALERT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 16, 2005
#05-16

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Dial-Up Internet Access Modems in Danger of Hijacking

Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers is warning consumers using dial-up Internet access they may be charged for international or long distance telephone calls they did not intend to make in a scam known as modem hijacking.

Modem hijacking is a fraudulent activity that has caused thousands of consumers nationwide to be charged for unintended international and long distance telephone calls that occur over the Internet. Modem hijacking takes place when the hijacker installs a dialer on the victim's computer (usually through a virus or seemingly innocent download), which switches the local telephone number used for dial-up access to the Internet to an international or long distance telephone number that charges expensive fees.

"Unfortunately, the victims usually don't realize there is a problem until unexpected charges appear on their telephone bills," General Summers said. "These fees may appear on your regular telephone bill or through the billing of another company."

Some precautions consumers can take to attempt to prevent a virus or an incident of modem hijacking include the following:

*Consider having the local telephone company place a block on your telephone line for international calls, 10-10 numbers and 900 numbers.

- *When visiting unfamiliar websites with pop-up advertisements, pay attention to warnings and the fine print that may include a request to switch you to an international telephone line.
- *Obtain and update virus scanning software, and install firewalls.
- *Spyware detection and pop-up advertisement blockers may be helpful.
- *Regularly update your operating system with the security updates provided by the manufacturer.
- *Check the dial-up connection information of your computer for any settings that appear unfamiliar.
- *When not using the Internet, unplug the telephone line from your computer. If you no longer use a telephone line to connect to the Internet, disconnect the telephone line from the computer.
- *Carefully review your telephone bill for international calls or other long distance calls that you did not make, and inquire with the local telephone company or billing company about the origin of the charges.
- *Avoid opening e-mails or downloading files from individuals or businesses that you don't know.

Tennessee consumers who are victims of modem hijacking charges should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission and the Tennessee Regulatory Authority. The Federal Trade Commission website is <http://www.ftc.gov/>. The Tennessee Regulatory Authority website is <http://www.state.tn.us/tra/>, and the Tennessee Regulatory Authority telephone number is 1-800-342-8359.